

27 March 1973

NIMA Declassification/Release Instructions on File

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Assistant, Strategic Arms Limitation
Executive Director, National Photographic
Interpretation Center
Deputy Director of Special Projects
Director of Strategic Research
Director, Imagery Analysis Service

SUBJECT: The National Area Exploitation File (NAEF)
and the National Imagery Interpretability
Rating Scale (NIIRS), dated 15 March 1973
(TCS-5217-73)

A line was inadvertently omitted in paragraph 3,
page 2. Please substitute the revised page 2 in your copy of
the subject document.

COMIREX Secretariat

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SUBJECT: The National Area Exploitation File (NAEF) and
the National Imagery Interpretability Rating
Scale (NIIRS)

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to review briefly the progress to date with respect to the NAEF and NIIRS and to identify further actions appropriate at this time.

Progress to Date

2. In late 1971 and early 1972, various independent reviews were undertaken concerning the photographic exploitation accountability and measurement of search accomplishment required to support monitoring of provisions of the SALT agreements. While conceptually there is no difference between strategic search in general and in the presence of SALT-type agreements, it was recognized that SALT would place special emphasis on knowing precisely what areas had been searched and the quality of imagery utilized. Given these two elements of information, the status of area search exploitation could be measured closely and objective confidence limits ascribed concerning the probability of the existence of prohibited activity. In short, we were looking for improved means of measuring and quantifying the "negation" function, as well as the detection and identification functions.

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3. In April 1972, an ad hoc task team, with COMIREX Staff, NPIC, and CIA/IAS representation, was formed to devise, on at least an exploratory basis, improved means of measuring and accounting for the status of area search exploitation and target surveillance with emphasis on recording the interpretability and quality of imagery searched. A secondary objective was to develop an improved means of validating and updating collection requirements accounting, both for evaluation and mission guidance purposes, based upon photo interpreter assessment of acquired photography.

4. To achieve these purposes, a specialized imagery interpretability rating scale, now called the "National Imagery Interpretability Rating Scale," was developed for use by the photo interpreters as a means of determining the interpretability of the searched imagery. A computerized file, the "National Area Exploitation File," was created to handle requisite exploitation data in a form compatible with extensive analytical use. Rating and exploitation data collection began with [redacted] both with respect to area search and point targets. A study was performed by NPIC to validate various aspects of the interpretability scale concept; use of an interpretability rating scale was shown to be conceptually valid. The data handling and file operation proved feasible and practicable; the initial output from the area exploitation file will soon be available.

5. A great deal of progress has been made, therefore, toward solution of a difficult and complex problem. The interpretability scale itself has undergone a number of changes since it was first drawn up, however, and continuing study has pointed toward certain feasible and desirable improvements.

Further Actions

6. As we decided in our recent discussions, it is now proposed to constitute a task team, with direct COMIREX, NPIC, and CIA/OSP participation, and other assistance as required to accomplish the additional steps that need to be taken. Briefly, these are:

- a. Prepare complete documentation concerning the objectives of the National Imagery Interpretability Rating Scale, the scale itself, its bases and its applications to insure that it is uniformly and correctly applied in practice.

b. Test and evaluate further the extant interpretability scale with respect to such things as its relative accuracy--does it measure to an adequate degree of precision that which it is designed to measure--its degree of correlation or consistency in application, the degree to which application is independent of imaging system, sources and magnitudes of variation, etc.

c. Design, test, and implement improvements in the interpretability scale, as appropriate, including investigation of relating the rating scale categories to collection systems' ground resolved distances, and to other important variables, using denied area imagery in conjunction with CONUS engineering imagery.

d. Establish and document interpretability and exploitation data handling procedures, timelines and points of contact in the appropriate organizations, including delineation of management responsibilities for the National Area Exploitation File.

e. Review initial planned National Area Exploitation File output; coordinate additional output desired in the short term (until establishment of file management).

f. Effect community coordination of the National Imagery Interpretability Rating Scale.

25X1A 7. [] has been in touch with various members of your staffs and will continue to act as the coordinator of this activity on your behalf.

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Chairman, COMIREX

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